

when he came to a certain town in his rounds. This was repeated one day at dinner, when a gentleman present said: "Judge, why don't you squelch that fellow?" The Judge, dropping his knife and fork, and placing his chin upon his hands, and his elbows upon the table, remarked: "Up in our town a widow woman has a dog that, whenever the moon shines, goes out upon the stoop and barks and barks away at it all night." Stopping short, he quietly resumed eating. After waiting some time, it was asked, "Well, Judge, what of the dog and the moon?" "Oh, the moon kept right on."

A BOY'S BARGAIN.

"SHINE! Shine 'em up, boss?"

"No!"

"First-class shine for a nickel!"

"No. Shut the door!"

The cold, damp air of a stormy November day blew in, chilling my office and wetting the floor with sleet, so I spoke rather sharply to the unwelcome intruder.

The door closed slowly, and I went on with my work, supposing the boy had gone out, but presently, to my surprise, on looking up for a moment, I found he was still standing by the radiator, warming his dirty, red hands.

"Boss," he said, "I am cold. Can't I stay and get warm?"

I nodded assent, and was about to take up my pen once more, but some touch of pathos in the tone of the young voice caught my attention, and I turned to look at the speaker. He was only a child, but the life of the streets had already given a shrewd and anxious expression to his face.

His thin, poor clothes were outgrown and outworn, his bare ankles showing below his ragged trowsers, and his bare toes sticking out from his ragged shoes.

He was wet through, and looked as though he might be hungry as well as cold, and yet he had cheery, self-reliant air, as if he knew how to bear hardship without whining about it.

"Young man," said I, "you ought not to be out in this weather. Your feet are soaked, and you'll be having sore throat first thing you know."

He turned a quick glance upon me, half-inquiring, half-distrustful, and then, finding I was really concerned about him, his face softened, and coming over to my desk, he held up the wreck of a shoe, from which the sole was half-ripped off.

"Mister," he said, "I do want new boots bad; that's a fact. I've got forty cents, and if I could get a dollar and ten cents more, I'd buy a good pair of second-handers."

"Forty cents isn't much toward a dollar and a half. How can you raise the rest of the money?"

"Well, if I could get two or three gentlemen to make a bargain with me, I might do it."

"A bargain! What sort of a bargain?"

"There used to was a gentleman in this here office as made bargains with me. Mr. Porter his name was, and he let me have a dollar, last winter, to get these shoes I've got on now."

"Mr. Porter? Yes, there was a Mr. Porter in this office before I took it; but I've heard he died some time last spring."

"Yes, he's dead, and I went to the funeral; leastways, I stood outside on the walk. He was a friend to me, he was; took me into his Sunday-school

class, and put a present for me onto the Christmas tree. It was a Santa Claus tree, but I knew who the Santa Claus was, well enough."

"I've understood that Mr. Porter was a very kind-hearted man, given to good works."

"He was so, Mister! He was the one as made bargains with me."

"You haven't told me what these bargains were like."

"Well, you see, he trusted me with a quarter, or sometimes as much as a dollar, and I worked it out—gave him a square shine every day for twenty cents a week. Wasn't that fair?"

"It was fair enough, if you kept your part of the bargain."

"Yes, boss, I know where the hitch is. Nobody don't trust us little rats, 'fraid we'll go back on you; and right you are, mostly."

"Didn't you ever go back on Mr. Porter?"

"You bet I didn't! I ain't one of that kind, and besides, he taught me better. No, sir, we made fair bargains, and I stuck to 'em, I did! That's business, ain't it?"

"Yes that's business. And now you want to make one of your bargains with me, for a dollar, do you?"

"There's a pair o' boots down in Carter's Alley as I can get for a dollar and a half, and I ain't got but forty cents. It is so rainy and drizzly this week that I hain't made my hash for three days. Nobody don't want a shine such weather as this, so there ain't much chance of gettin' them boots unless I could make a bargain for a dollar and ten cents."

"If you should get the money and buy the boots, what would you do for 'hash,' as you call it? Do you live at home?"

"Don't live nowhere. But that's nothing. I'd go short of my feed to get the boots. Done it many a time, and can again."

"Suppose I make a bargain with you for part of the money, can you get any other gentleman to advance you the rest?"

"Mister, I ain't askin' folks to trust me any more. It ain't no use, and they'd only think I was a fraud. I told you about it along o' him; he used to set just where you're a setting' now."

"Well, my boy, you haven't asked me to trust you; but your old friend had faith in you it seems, and so will I. Here is half a dollar, which you can work out by the week, and here is a dime, free gift, towards the boots. Now, for the rest. Take my card in to Mr. Newell, next door, and he and his partner will also make a bargain with you, at my request."

"Mister, I thought, somehow, you'd help me, 'cause he used to. I remember once his sayin' to me, 'A good deed never dies.' I didn't know what he meant at the time, but I do now. I'll come in every day and give you a parlor shine, see if I don't."

Mr. Newell and I usually took lunch together, and when I met him, the following day, he was inclined to rally me about my bargain.

"Your boy hasn't turned up to-day," he said, "You don't fancy you'll ever see him again, do you?"

"Certainly!" I replied. "I believe he's an honest little chap, and will keep his word."

I spoke confidently, but it was in spite of some fear of my own that my experiment might turn out a failure.

About four o'clock, however, the boy

came in, much to my satisfaction. He had his new boots on, and seemed quite proud of them, but he was very quiet, and not at all talkative. I thought he was not looking well, but he did not complain, and I neglected to question him.

The next day was Sunday, and on Monday I was out of town. Tuesday, at lunch time, Mr. Newell mentioned that my boy had not been in, smiling, as if to say, "I told you so."

I looked for the little fellow that afternoon with a good deal of interest, and, when obliged to close my office without seeing him, was much disappointed. On Wednesday I watched and waited again, but again he failed to appear. My neighbor next door, made some jesting remarks at my expense, but, on the whole, was very patient, considering the circumstances. Toward the close of the week, I mentioned the matter to him myself, and said I was afraid the boy might be sick.

"Yes," said Mr. Newell, "sick of his bargain. We've seen the last of him. Pity, too! Bright boy! But what can you expect? They are all alike."

I was obliged to acknowledge that my friend was probably right, and very sorry I was to come to that conclusion. It was not the loss of the dollar that troubled me, though no one likes to be defrauded out of even a trifle, but I had taken a fancy to the child, felt an interest in him, believed in him, and wanted to serve him. I liked his looks; thought he had a good, honest face and true eyes, and to be forced to admit that I had been deceived, that my *protege* was a common little cheat, was really quite a severe trial.

A busy man, however, has little time for regret in this world, and after a few days my boy and his bargain began to fade from my mind. At the end of about a week, as nearly as I can remember, coming down town late one morning, I found a lady waiting for me. I had never seen her before and she had evidently never seen me, for, after looking at me closely a moment she said:

"I think you must be the gentleman I am seeking?"

I replied that I hoped so, if I could serve her in any way.

"It is not for myself," she answered; "but I am one of the visitors at the Children's Hospital, and there is a patient in my ward very anxious to see a gentleman whose name he doesn't know, but who has an office here, as nearly as I can follow the directions."

"A boy of nine or ten years, with a pleasant smile and bright blue eyes?"

"He is too sick to smile, but he's about that age, and certainly has blue eyes. He has been in a high fever and delirium for ten days, and, now that his mind is clear again, he is sorely troubled about some bargain he has made, which he cannot keep."

"That's my little friend. His bargain is with me, and I'm very grateful to you for coming to me. I will go to him at once, and shall be only too glad to do anything I can for him."

Excusing myself for a moment, I ran and opened Mr. Newell's door, calling out:

"I've found my boy. He's sick in the Children's Hospital."

"You don't say so!" he exclaimed! "Delighted to hear it! That is, of course, I'm sorry he's sick, but glad you've heard from him. Fact is, I couldn't bear to think that little fellow

could be a fraud. Here's five dollars to help take care of him."

I said the hospital would take care of him, and I would see he did not want for anything, but he insisted I should take the money, and give it to the hospital if the child did not need it.

On the way up town, I asked the lady visitor if her patient was in a dangerous condition, and she replied that the doctor considered the case a critical one. The child had suffered from exposure and hardship, until his constitution had been undermined, and the fever had left him so low it was questionable whether he had vital force enough to get up again.

On arriving at the hospital, I was shown into a plainly-furnished but pleasant reception-room, while my guide went to prepare her charge to see me. She presently returned and conducted me to a large, well-lighted, cheerful room, with a row of five white little beds on each side. I looked along from one to another, but did not recognize my boy.

Some of the patients were propped up, looking at picture books, or trying to read, and others were lying, pale and still, seemingly asleep, but there was no one among them that I knew.

When the lady stopped beside one of the beds, and lifting up a thin wasted hand from the counterpane, said, "The gentleman is here, my child," I felt sure that some mistake had been made, and that the sick boy was not my little debtor, after all. His hollow cheek was as colorless as the snowy pillow against which it rested, and there was an innocent, child-like expression upon his features, so utterly different from the sharp, wary shrewdness, that I could not believe him to be my little street Arab.

His eyes were closed, and he lay so quiet that he hardly seemed to breathe; but when I took his hand, he looked up in my face and a wan smile hovered around his pallid lips. Then I knew him, and I'm not ashamed to confess that for a moment my eyes dimmed and I could not trust myself to speak.

As I bent toward him, he whispered, so faintly that I could scarcely catch the words:

"I felt sure you'd come, mister, 'cause you was kind to me."

"Of course I'd come, and I've been anything but kind to neglect you so long."

"It's all right. I've been taken care of the best kind, but I wanted to tell you that I didn't mean to go back on my bargain."

"My dear boy, don't be troubled about that or anything else. I know you're honest and true, and I'm very, very glad to know it, too; but you mustn't think about business now. You have made friends all around you, and we all want you to get well very soon; so you must help us by trying to rest contented and free from care."

"Yes, everybody is good to me, and now that you know I've been sick, I'll be satisfied."

I sat with him a few minutes, and then the watchful nurse, seeing a flush coming to his cheek, warned me it was time to depart.

But I returned the next morning and visited him every day thereafter. He lingered between life and death for two weeks, and then I had the grateful satisfaction of telling him he was fairly out of danger.

As soon as he could be moved, we found a home for him in a quiet friend's